

**U DX156**

**Conscientious objection  
and the First World War**

**1916-1917**

**Historical Background:**

In March 1916 the Military Service Act allowed conscientious objectors, who could convince a military service tribunal, to be exempt from service but required service as a civilian or as a non-combatant in the army. It is estimated that there were about 16,000 conscientious objectors, with a large number being Quakers, about a third were forced into the army and then imprisoned if they continued to refuse orders.

Many objectors faced harsh imprisonment, with many dying as a result of their treatment those assigned to non-combatant roles were often given dangerous tasks for example as stretcher-bearers.

**Custodial history:**

Donated by TDW Reid, Stockport, 15 Feb 1983

**Description:**

Small collection of items relating to conscientious objection including a typescript copy of a diary of an objector's experiences, printed extracts from a soldier of the battlefields of France and a dietary sheet for Walton Prison, Liverpool.

**Extent:** 4 items

**Related material:**

Records of the No Conscription Fellowship (Willesden Branch) [Ref U DCO]

Correspondence and journal of Robin Page Arnot as a conscientious objector [U DAR/2]

Papers of P. Smith relating to pacifism and conscientious objectors [Ref U DX76]

Correspondence of Frank and Myfanwy Westrope during Frank's imprisonment as a conscientious objector [U DX135]

**Access conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

Hull History Centre: Conscientious objection and the First World War

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| U DX156/1 | Diary of Edwin Dawson, a conscientious objector<br>Typescript copy (3 pages) includes his refusal to sign papers, or wear the army uniform but does attend Bible Class in the YMCA hut. He decides to accept nothing from the Army (including food), and is then taken by train to a drill camp in Northallerton, Yorkshire but continues to refuse to sign papers. After 11 days he eventually agrees to sign if he can then be transferred to the Royal Army Medical Corp.<br>1 item | 24 Jul-6 Aug<br>1916 |
| U DX156/2 | 'The Diary of a British Soldier on the Battlefields of France, 1914-1916', by Lieutenant-Colonel A.E. Powell of the King's Liverpool Regiment<br>Printed extracts.<br>1 item   | 1917                 |
| U DX156/3 | Letter: Ronald Jackson B.E.F. [British Expeditionary Force], to Albert<br>States that the food is 'very good' and that the officers and NCO's are decent.<br>1 item  | 28 Jul 1917          |
| U DX156/4 | 'Dietary at Walton Prison, Liverpool'<br>Manuscript list provides details of the daily allowances for potatoes, bread etc with details of diet for ordinary and for vegetarians, the latter consisting of barley soup and cheese.<br>1 item  | [1917]               |